

[The Dance of Noaknim]

WINTER CEREMONIAL DANCES

53

any uninitiated from their path. The *kutusiut* also call *Asip* repeatedly, a further deterrent to the inquisitive. Alder and birch trees are selected and the hewers start to work. When ever a tree falls, one of the party calls out:

Xw...

This meaningless ejaculation, spoken as if by X, has the virtue of causing the tree to fall gently. The logs are cut into sections and as many provided as will be needed, since it is contrary to *kutusiut* custom for more than one trip to be made for wood. Towards dusk the cutters return, each carrying a burden by means of a tump-line across the forehead. The wood is laid softly on the floor, for it would be a gross insult to throw it down roughly. Meanwhile heralds are summoning the *kutusiut* with a call of:

Nusiutlup kutusiut.

X has long since consulted his relatives on the one hand and the marshals on the other, concerning the number of masks to be used, and the beings to be portrayed. A mask of *Anelikutlup* is prepared for every *kutusiut* dance, but with this exception there is no uniformity in the representations. A man always shows his patron, as well as any beings intimately connected with him. Thus X must have a mask of *Noaknim*, many of his passengers, and the supernatural beings who meet him at the mouth of the river. A present must be given to the carver of every mask, hence their actual number depends upon the expenditure X and his relatives are willing to make.

At dusk the *kutusiut* are summoned by the heralds. X is with the marshals behind the fire and he heeds their advice as to the best carpenter for any special mask. When all have assembled X holds up one of the blocks of wood, calls on one of the *kutusiut* by name and says:

"For *Noaknim*," or whatever may be the figure required.

As the carpenter comes forward to take the billet the heralds call out:

"Pay attention to him," and as the carpenter takes the wood, X calls out at the top of his voice, xw...

575*

796*

532

784

313

789

[482]

[203]*

[431]

465

[203]*

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789